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Sent as E-mail attachment: envtestimony@cga.ct.gov

Chairman, Co-chairman and Members
Environment Committee
Connecticut General Assembly
Legislative Office Building, Room 3200
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: S.B. No. 226 An Act Concerning Single-Use Carryout Bags
S.B. No. 233 An Act Concerning A Reduction Of Consumer-Based Packaging Materials.

Dear Chairman, Co-chairman and Members:

I offer special thanks to the Environment Committee for conducting its hearing on the proposed bills.

Background

Senate Bill 226 proposes a phased-in transition to one hundred per cent recyclable single-use carryout bags that contain not less than eighty per cent post-consumer recycled materials and to require the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection ("DEEP") to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the grocery and retail industries that provides for a fifty per cent reduction in the distribution of paper bags and plastic single-use carryout bags by 2021. The Bill, also, requires DEEP to amend its solid waste plan by the middle of 2017. And further requires DEEP to examine the viability of requiring an industry-financed stewardship program, something like what we have for paint, mattresses and electronic equipment

Senate Bill 233 proposes to reduce the amount of consumer packaging in Connecticut's solid waste stream.

Consumer packaging is the single largest component of our solid waste stream. It constitutes about a quarter to one-third of municipal trash by weigh and possibly more than that by volume. The retail industry makes and ships to stores an estimated 102 billion polyethylene bags, which are handed out to consumers every year. This means that about 800 bags a year is provided to every household in the state.

These bills support DEEP's ongoing effort to increase the amount of recycled material from just over one-third of the 3.6-million-ton annual waste stream in Connecticut, to 60 percent, by 2024. This includes diverting all kinds of refuse that ends up being burned at one of the five trash-to-energy plants, from toxic materials to yard cuttings to food waste.

Polyethylene bags account for one-sixth of all polyethylene that's used exclusive of other plastic compositions used for wrapping, packing and carrying stuff, much of which we don't need. And it doesn't include paper bags, which are friendlier to throw away but apparently use more energy to produce than plastic.

BJ's and Costco do not offer bags made with any material. They offer used cardboard shipping boxes. All other retailers should do the same.

Comments

The 800 Pound Gorilla in Solid Waste Management – Fossil Fuel Waste.

DEEP's Solid Waste Management for materials disposal relies on this slogan for its web page: REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE. DEEP should embrace four R's with the first being **REFUSE**. Only REFUSE results in zero energy demand and waste.

Mankind lives in the Fossil Fuel Age. Today coal, oil, and natural gas supply 93% of the world's energy; waterpower accounts for only 1%; and the labor of men and domestic animals the remaining 6%. This is a startling reversal of corresponding figures for 1850 - only a century and a half ago. Then fossil fuels supplied 5% of the world's energy, and men and animals 94%. **Five sixths of all the coal, oil, and gas consumed since the beginning of the Fossil Fuel Age has been burned up in the last 100 years.**

These fuels have been known to man for more than 3,000 years. In parts of China, coal was used for domestic heating and cooking, and natural gas for lighting as early as 1000 B.C. The Babylonians burned asphalt a thousand years earlier. But these early uses were sporadic and of no economic significance. Fossil fuels did not become a major source of energy until machines running on coal, gas, or oil were invented. Wood, for example, was the most important fuel until 1880 when it was replaced by coal; coal, in turn, has only recently been surpassed by oil in this country.

Once in full swing, fossil fuel consumption has accelerated at phenomenal rates. All the fossil fuels used before 1900 would not last five years at today's rates of consumption.

Nowhere are these rates higher and growing faster than in the United States. Our country, with only 6% of the world's population, uses one third of the world's total energy input; this proportion would be even greater except that we use energy more efficiently than other countries. Each American has at his disposal, each year, energy equivalent to that obtainable from eight tons of coal. This is six times the world's per capita energy consumption. Though not quite so spectacular, corresponding figures for other highly industrialized countries also show above average consumption figures. The United Kingdom, for example, uses more than three times as much energy as the world average.

With high energy consumption goes a high standard of living. Thus the enormous fossil energy which we in this country control feeds machines which make each of us master of an army of mechanical slaves. **Man's muscle power is rated at 35 watts continuously, or one-twentieth horsepower. Machines therefore furnish every American industrial worker with energy equivalent to that of 244 men, while at least 2,000 men push his automobile along the road, and his family is supplied with 33 faithful household helpers. Each locomotive engineer controls energy equivalent to that of 100,000 men; each jet pilot of 700,000 men. Truly, the humblest American enjoys the services of more slaves than were once owned by the richest nobles, and lives better than most ancient kings.**

Whether this Golden Age will continue depends entirely upon our ability to keep energy supplies in balance with the needs of our growing population. Possession of surplus energy is, of course, a requisite for any kind of civilization, for if man possesses merely the energy of his own muscles, he must expend all his strength - mental and physical - to obtain the bare necessities of life.

THE ONLY RATIONAL DECISION GOING FORWARD IS TO BAN PLASTIC BAGS EITHER SOLD OR DONATED.

Very truly yours,



Robert Fromer
Environmental Consultant